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**Testimony of Giudi Weiss
Gray Panthers
on the Department of Energy's
Draft Environmental Impact Statement for a
Geologic Repository for the Disposal of Spent Nuclear Fuel and
High-Level Radioactive Waste at Yucca Mountain, Nye County, Nevada
Chicago, Illinois – February 1, 2000**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Giudi Weiss and I'm here on behalf of the Gray Panthers.

You may know that the Gray Panthers are a group founded some 30 years ago by Maggie Kuhn. We are a nationwide group—multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-generational—dedicated to the cause of social and economic justice.

1... We believe that democratic governments exist as agencies of the people, and that the common welfare is best served when all of us share in determining public policy.

Despite this hearing and the others being held around the country, we have not had that opportunity on policy concerning the disposal of nuclear waste.

I try to be an informed citizen, and to keep on top of issues I care about. Yet I learned of this hearing only days ago. That's hardly time to read an Environmental Impact Statement some 1,400 pages in length. How can I make an informed decision about a controversial nuclear waste dump and the cross-country movement of thousands of shipments of nuclear waste? How can I assess the risk to my community? And how can I assess the risk to future generations?

To do that, I need clear and accurate information. But those who have studied the DEIS tell me it's more of a hindrance than a help to understanding. Despite its imposing length, it fails to give us the information we need. Worse, it actively confuses readers so that we can't form an accurate picture of our risks.

Let me give you a few examples:

2 1. To get to Yucca Mountain, radioactive waste will travel through 43 states, past the homes, workplaces, and schools of 50 million Americans. I am one of those Americans. But the DEIS doesn't show me which routes the waste will take, and it doesn't address the conditions along those routes. So how can I assess the risk to my community? How can I assess the risk to future generations?

3 2. The sheer amount of radioactive material that will be shipped in the next three decades is unprecedented in world history. What's more, most of it will be spent fuel from nuclear power plants, and virtually none of this type of material has ever been shipped before. The casks that will carry it have never been built, never been physically tested. So how can I assess the risk to my community? And how can I assess the risk to future generations?

4 3. The DOE acknowledges that accidents involving the radioactive shipments are inevitable; in fact, there will be hundreds of these accidents over the course of 30 years. But the DEIS doesn't examine what emergency-response training and equipment my community will need, or what the specific impacts of a transportation accident in Chicago will be. So how can I assess the risk to my community? How can I assess the risk to future generations?

5 The DOE almost did not have a hearing here in Chicago. And as far as I can tell, the Department has done nothing to educate the people of Chicago about the Yucca Mountain Project or the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. If the DOE would just as soon not let us know the facts . . . Well, how can any of us assess the risk—to ourselves, to our communities, and to future generations?

6 The Gray Panthers are realists. We are not categorically opposed to nuclear power. And we know that something must be done with nuclear waste.

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So what is it I'm asking for? At this point, nothing more than time. I want time to analyze your 1,400-page environmental impact document. I want time to make an informed decision. And I want time to add my voice, and the voice of the Gray Panthers, to this precedent-setting public policy.

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And something more: We want you to rewrite the DEIS so it's clear and honest—so it gives us the information we need to assess the risk to all of our communities . . . and the risk to future generations.

Thank you.